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Security Council

Sixty-fourth year

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Tuesday, 30 June 2009, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr İlkin	(Turkey)
Members:	Austria	Mr. Mayr-Harting
	Burkina Faso	Mr. Kafando
	China	Mr. Liu Zhenmin
	Costa Rica	Mr. Hernández-Milian
	Croatia	Mr. Vilović
	France	Mr. Ripert
	Japan	Mr. Okuda
	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Mr. Dabbashi
	Mexico	Mr. Heller
	Russian Federation	Mr. Dolgov
	Uganda	Mr. Rugunda
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir John Sawers
	United States of America	Ms. Rice
	Viet Nam	Mr. Bui The Giang

Agenda

The situation in Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2009/323)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2009/323)

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Afghanistan, Australia, Canada, the Czech Republic, Germany, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Italy, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway and Pakistan, in which they request to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the consideration of the item, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Tanin (Afghanistan) took a seat at the Council table; the representatives of the other aforementioned countries took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President: On behalf of the Council, I wish to extend a warm welcome to His Excellency The Honourable Lawrence Cannon, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Canada.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Kai Eide, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan.

It is so decided.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2009/323, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear a briefing by Mr. Kai Eide. I now give him the floor.

Mr. Eide: The current situation in Afghanistan is certainly the most complex that we have witnessed in many years. However, if managed well, I believe that it could also become a turning point in our efforts to bring the conflict to an end. The situation is complex because we have to keep so many perspectives and processes in mind at the same time, namely, the need to ensure an election process that is credible and where the result can be accepted by the people, the need to stimulate promising and positive developments in several sectors in spite of the noise from the election campaign and an intense fighting season, and the need to look beyond the elections and shape a more focused agenda for the next five years, one that will have to include a credible peace process as an integral part of the overall strategy. I say we, but, of course, in all those processes it is the Afghan institutions and the Afghan people who will have to take the lead. As always, the role of the international community must be to provide full support.

The August elections are about more than choosing Afghanistan's future leaders. They are about strengthening the people's confidence in democratic processes and about strengthening Afghanistan's democratic institutions. They are not only about who will lead, but also about the legitimacy of leadership. I have therefore urged all candidates to campaign with dignity and with fairness. An election campaign will always be divisive, but in this country at this juncture it is critically important that campaign disagreements are managed and are replaced by unity of purpose in building the country when the next presidential inauguration takes place. All candidates must keep that long-term perspective in mind.

I have called on Government institutions and officials to maintain impartiality during all phases of the election process. As the Council knows, the President has issued a decree on non-interference by State institutions. Ministers and heads of security institutions have assured me, in my many discussions with them, of their determination to protect the integrity of their institutions. We will maintain a

continuous dialogue with all of them to address cases of interference if and when they occur.

I have also called on all candidates to avoid any inflammatory language and to conduct campaigns focused on their vision for Afghanistan's future. We need campaigns that are focused not only on who will lead the country but on where they will lead it. And I have called on the international community to avoid any interference or appearance of interference in the election process. Any such interference would undermine the legitimacy of the process, as well as people's confidence in their future leaders. In particular, it would harm the future Government's ability to bring the Afghan people together in a credible peace process. No one's interests can be served by an election result that is disputed by the people and affects the legitimacy of the future Government.

Those elements — non-interference, a dignified policy-oriented debate and total international impartiality — are critical elements of the level playing field that we all seek to establish. Of course, another element is the ability of candidates to conduct their campaigns. I am encouraged to see that the Afghan media will hold a significant number of presidential debates during the campaign. I appeal to all media, including the public media, to ensure that candidates have fair access. The Minister of the Interior has offered to provide close protection to candidates during their campaigning. The Minister of Defence has offered transportation for candidates, within the limits of his capabilities. Both measures will contribute to a credible campaign.

Two weeks ago, I visited a so-called call centre, where voters can call in to ask questions about the elections. The centre now receives around 25,000 calls every week from voters across the country, in particular young voters. It is an important part of the efforts of the Independent Election Commission's outreach programme to mobilize voters. The United Nations has and will continue to appeal to all voters to take part in the election process. Such participation is essential to the legitimacy of the election results and to the future strength of democratically elected institutions. Our call goes to all Afghans without any exceptions.

The Secretary-General's report (S/2009/323) describes some of the progress we have seen during recent months in strengthening security institutions, reforming the agricultural and private sectors, improving revenue collection and the Government's internal coordination and developing comprehensive civilian capacity-building programmes. I must say that there is a totally new momentum in those areas. My fear, however, is that the noise from the election campaign and the fighting season will absorb so much energy and attention that it will overshadow the positive trends and affect the momentum that has now developed. If we do not succeed in maintaining that momentum, then I am afraid we will witness new stagnation and more disillusionment among the public.

Those positive trends are of course primarily the result of competent Afghan ministries. But they are also a result of a strong and long-term commitment by the international community. We must remain firm in that long-term commitment, on which continued progress will depend. However, progress will also depend upon the short-term ability to respond to new opportunities.

The work now under way in the Ministry of Agriculture will result in a gap assessment and proposals for how to reform the agricultural sector. The work under way in the Ministry of Finance will result in a list of priorities for civilian capacity-building efforts. All those topics will be discussed in the Joint Coordination Monitoring Board (JCMB) meeting to be held in a few days' time. That work will also result in a plan for more ambitious revenue collection. The efforts under way by the Ministry of Interior and the international community will result in proposals for a stronger and reformed Afghan National Police. When those proposals are presented to us, we must be able to respond quickly and flexibly. It cannot be that we ask Afghan authorities year after year to address our concerns, but when a minister responds we reply that this year's budget will not allow us to react. Let me give one example.

This spring, the Ministry of Agriculture asked for an urgent contribution of $5.5 million for the purchase of wheat seed, to allow farmers to plant next year's crop. In spite of a number of appeals, it has not been possible to provide the resources required. We cannot end up in a situation where we have to turn to Bill Gates to meet urgent requirements of that nature. If we respond quickly and effectively where encouraging new developments occur, it will stimulate similar developments in other sectors. But if we fail to

respond, then I fear that we could face setbacks even where progress can now be seen.

But I must emphasize that we are also seeing some new and promising trends in the international community's performance. In particular, the review of United States development policies over the past weeks has produced important results. I welcome the readiness to support the new national agriculture programme and the Government's plans for civilian capacity-building and for revenue collection. There is a trend to support Afghan plans and Afghan priorities much more generously than before. This could represent a major shift and lead to greater aid effectiveness and better donor coordination. The shift in United States counter-narcotics policies, combined with the new Afghan programme for the development of alternative livelihoods, could also have a significant impact on our efforts to combat poppy production.

However, the inequitable distribution of resources within Afghanistan continues, making it easier for the insurgency to destabilize previously stable provinces and districts. There is still a serious lack of reporting on how and where development resources are spent, which complicates, of course, planning and coordination. I hope that the ongoing gap assessment in key sectors will lead donors to provide more information about their spending and to a distribution of resources that provides greater resources for under-funded provinces.

The United Nations has of course worked closely with the relevant ministries during the elaboration of the new plans, which have now been presented. We will continue this cooperation during the implementation phase. We are already working with other ministries to address serious imbalances, such as the entire educational sector.

There is still much talk about the lack of coordination, and it is justified. However, I do feel, on this subject, that many are still discussing yesterday's debate. The situation has changed over the past few months, and I believe that we are now turning a corner. The Afghan Government is better coordinated, there are encouraging signs in the international community of better coordination, and the ability of the United Nations to carry out its coordination mandate has improved.

More effective and coordinated development efforts will enable us, of course, to meet the concerns of the Afghan people and their legitimate demands for greater economic and social justice, and it will enhance the people's confidence in their own Government and in the international community. Then we must also strengthen our efforts to ensure that the military engagement of the international community remains supported by the Afghan people. In his report, the Secretary-General appeals for a review of the operations of special forces, which account by far for the majority of civilian casualties caused by pro-Government forces. He appeals for a review of the use of air power in populated areas, which has led to tragic loss of lives as the result of mistakes, and he appeals for better training of international military forces to prepare them better for the Afghan cultural and political context in which they operate. It is my view that the political costs of recent mistakes are simply disproportionate to the military gains and that such reviews are urgently required.

I therefore strongly welcome General McChrystal's commitment to a fundamental shift in attitude. That is an important statement. We all know that it is impossible to fight the insurgency effectively without maintaining the support of the population. With additional international forces on the ground, that challenge will become even more critical. The United Nations will continue to monitor and address incidents of civilian casualties in an independent manner, based on our human rights mandate. But, more importantly — or at least as importantly — we are ready to work with the new commander in his reviews to help avoid the loss of civilian lives in whatever way we possibly can.

But let me repeat: the clear majority of civilian casualties are caused by the insurgency, for whom the casualties are not a result of tragic mistakes, but of deliberate policy.

What I have just said is not aimed at presenting a rosy picture of the overall situation in Afghanistan. The prospects for progress are seriously undermined by the ongoing conflict. The number of security incidents rose beyond the 1,000 mark for the first time in May, and the number of such incidents increased by 43 per cent over the first four months of this year compared to the same period last year. However, I should add that these figures are not necessarily a good measurement of the success or failure of the insurgency. There are more incidents in parts of the country that, up to now, have

been stable. This is, no doubt, the most intense fighting season we have experienced.

It is also clear that the fight against widespread corruption is still in its early stages. Institutions are still weak, not only in human capacity, but in physical infrastructure, particularly at the subnational level. Allow me to mention that six provinces still do not have offices for their governors. Only half of the district governors have an office building, and 288 do not have a vehicle. This has a tremendous impact on their ability to administer the country and deliver services to the people.

I mentioned in the opening of my speech that we must also have a perspective that goes beyond the elections. In Paris and at The Hague Conference, clear priorities were set for our common efforts. We need a common strategic vision for the post-election period, a vision that can provide a clearer direction and guide us over the next few years in support of a new Government; a development strategy that can enable us to move forward in a more disciplined and coordinated way and that allows for greater Afghan ownership; a security strategy that accelerates the build-up of Afghan security forces and their role in ensuring the stability of the country; and, finally, a political strategy that includes a credible and inclusive peace process, respects the rights of all Afghans — men, women and children — and brings the various parts of the country together in an inclusive manner. All these elements must be integral parts of our vision for the post-election period.

Two weeks ago, I addressed almost 1,000 Afghan religious and intellectual leaders, including opposition leaders, at an event dedicated to the need for an inclusive peace process. My message to them was that such a process must be Afghan-owned and Afghan-led. But the United Nations must be prepared to be a partner in such a process, and I am dedicated to helping bring about that partnership.

However, a credible and successful peace process can only take place if we have a Government that enjoys the support of the people and has confidence in itself, and that can only take place if we have an international presence that enjoys the support of the people and has confidence in itself.

This past week I was invited to attend the G8 meeting in Trieste. It was the last of a series of meetings devoted to the regional aspects of and the regional potential for the development of Afghanistan. The need for closer regional cooperation on security matters is absolutely obvious. However, the potential goes much further. In the short term, experts from the region who know the language, the culture and the climate can often be more effective and less costly than experts from further away and could make a valuable contribution to the development of Afghan capacities. In the longer term, key infrastructure programmes could turn Afghanistan from being a barrier to trade to becoming a corridor for regional economic activities. Such infrastructure would also help Afghanistan to exploit its own natural and human resources. Allow me to say that Afghanistan is a very poor country, but it is not destined to poverty. It has vast mineral resources, such as the largest iron ore reserves in Asia.

Infrastructure, as agriculture, is seriously underfunded. If we could concentrate on a very limited number of strategic infrastructure projects, then the impact on sustained economic growth, employment and revenue collection would be tremendous.

A railway network from the Iranian border through Herat and north-east to Central Asia and China, as well as from the Pakistani border through Jalalabad linking up in the north with the lines to Central Asia and to the Iranian border, would stimulate regional trade and would enable Afghanistan to exploit and export its mineral resources. Agreements already exist for building significant parts of this network. There is a need to fill in the gaps. It would over time have a great impact on Afghanistan's dependence on foreign assistance. The expansion of the electricity lines from Central Asia through Afghanistan would have a similar impact and generate activities in a wide range of economic areas. That dimension should also be an important part of our vision for Afghanistan and its region over the next few years.

Finally, a few words about the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA): its mandate is multifaceted and ambitious — very ambitious, I feel sometimes. The expectations of the international community are high, and I am certainly grateful for the additional resources given in December last year that enabled us to expand the mission significantly. However, the situation has evolved significantly even in the six months that have passed since the 2009 budget was adopted.

With rising expectations and rising opportunities emerging on the ground, there is also a need for greater resources: to fulfil our mandate in donor coordination; to meet the new opportunities in capacity- and institution-building; and to expand across the country, as requested in Security Council resolutions. UNAMA does not itself bring financial resources. However, a country-wide presence of our mission could serve as a magnet to other civilian organizations and gradually draw development and governance efforts out of the military context and into the civilian context where they belong. And it could help to facilitate an all-inclusive political process through a better civilian outreach programme. I therefore appeal to the Council to support us in our urgent need for additional resources, and I will come back to address that subject in more precise terms.

In the discussions in March, in the mandate given to us, the Security Council asked the mission to develop benchmarks for our activities. This work is under way and will be finalized in time for the Secretary-General's next report in September. It is not an easy task, and not a task that we take lightly, since UNAMA's efforts form an integral part of the efforts of many others, both Afghan authorities and international institutions. It is also hard to establish timelines and means of measuring progress in political processes, especially in a context as unpredictable and complex as that of Afghanistan. Consultations are under way with our partners, and I am confident that by September we will be able to present the Council with a set of meaningful benchmarks.

The President: I thank Mr. Kai Eide for his briefing. I give the floor to the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan.

Mr. Tanin (Afghanistan): Let me first congratulate you, Sir, for assuming the presidency of the Council this month and thank you for convening this debate on Afghanistan. These debates offer an important opportunity to take stock of the situation and ensure that we move forward in a unified fashion. Let me also thank my friend Kai Eide for his typically insightful briefing. We welcome the Secretary-General's report on Afghanistan (S/2009/323), and are grateful for the incisive, detailed assessment of where we are now and where we are going.

We are nearing a new beginning in Afghanistan. Five years ago we held our first elections after decades of a bloody power struggle. Despite the continuing terrorist activities by the Taliban and Al-Qaida, Afghanistan has made enormous progress since 2001 and our people are ready to go to the polls for a second time. This, in itself, is a huge success and reflects the enduring Afghan support for the stabilization process and the value of the partnership between Afghanistan and the international community.

The elections have been planned for less than three months from now. Between now and August, we must act to ensure the transparency and fairness of the electoral process. There is a lot at stake. Afghans know that the elections are the only feasible way to build on the positive progress of the past years, but in order for them to do so the elections must be credible and legitimate. The results of the elections should serve to unite the Afghan people, strengthen Afghan institutions and provide momentum for ongoing stabilization efforts.

In terms of the campaign, the rules of the game have been defined by law and the Government of Afghanistan and other relevant bodies are working to ensure that the candidates receive security, transportation and access to the media. For the elections themselves, the essential priority is to ensure security so that people from all over the country will be able to vote. In that regard, the Afghan National Army and Police will provide the main security for more than 7000 polling stations nationwide, supported by a strengthened international force.

In addition, independent bodies like the Independent Election Commission, the Electoral Complaints Commission and the Media Commission will be responsible for providing information, logistics and oversight, guaranteeing access to media for candidates and responding to concerns and questions from the public. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General continue to play an essential role here as the international focal point, along with the Government of Afghanistan, in ensuring a transparent, legitimate and credible elections process.

The upcoming elections have deservedly been the centre of attention among both Afghans and the international community. However, we must remember that they are part of larger ongoing efforts for change and stability that go beyond the election process. The

coming months should reinvigorate the partnership between the Government of Afghanistan and the international community. We should use the elections to add additional momentum to the strategic shifts that began this year. And we should unify our approach and focus on, first, the need to strengthen Afghan institutions and make them sustainable and, secondly, the need to be increasingly responsive to the growing expectations of the Afghan people, who want to see a tangible improvement in their lives.

The past months, with some welcome strategic reviews by the United States and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), have provided us with a timely opportunity to review our achievements and rethink our strategies in different multilateral arenas. Combined with increasing involvement from Afghan ministries, this has resulted in a shift towards a more unified strategic approach, focusing on an intensified civilian effort, an improvement in subnational governance and service delivery and increased alignment of international priorities with Afghan national strategies. We must continue to build on the substantial progress made thus far.

In the past eight years, Afghanistan has grown from a country devoid of society, Government and infrastructure to one with thousands of miles of roads, millions of children in school and access to basic health care for 85 per cent of the population. In addition, the Government of Afghanistan has made positive developments in anti-corruption and the rule of law. The international community has helped us to build, train and equip an army and police force that can begin to protect our citizens. Kabul and a few other cities now have uninterrupted electricity, and, in a promising and historic development, Afghanistan will be agriculturally self-sufficient this year for the first time.

But daunting challenges remain to be adequately addressed in the areas of security, development and regional cooperation. First, security is worsening, rather than improving, and civilians continue to disproportionately bear the costs. The Taliban have shown an increasing disregard for human life, intentionally targeting civilians, particularly women, children and humanitarian staff, and using populated areas to stage attacks on international forces in order to impose civilian casualties.

As the international military force increases in strength over the summer and as security worsens in parts of the country in advance of the elections, we must be particularly careful to avoid an increase in the loss of civilian lives. We applaud the recent steps taken by NATO and by the United States to address those concerns and the recently announced improved guidelines for rules of engagement and use of air bombardment. It is our hope that those steps will serve to strengthen the partnership between the international community and the Afghan people and to reassure Afghans that the Government and the international community see their protection as a priority.

Secondly, despite more focused and unified goals, our development efforts remain fragmented, inefficient and incomplete. Poverty in Afghanistan has increased since 2001, and unemployment is one of the biggest challenges. Governance, corruption and the rule of law still need sustained attention both from the Government and from the international community. Humanitarian and development aid should be better coordinated and more accountable. Resources need to be funnelled towards capacity-building for the Afghan Government because, as the Secretary-General's report so eloquently states, we need a lasting expansion of Government presence and not a temporary expansion of foreign presence.

To address that issue, the civilian surge will be the backbone of the successful implementation of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy, because it will further support national development priorities and programmes in key sectors. In addition, improvements in subnational governance and service delivery can help disrupt the negative impacts of insecurity and provide Afghans with the incentives to engage with the stabilization process. In both those efforts, donors' political, technical and financial assistance must be aligned behind national priorities.

In that regard, my Government continues to fully support the essential coordination role of UNAMA. We welcome UNAMA's strengthened mandate and applaud the courageous work of its men and women, who have accomplished so much. We also welcome the recently signed United Nations Development Assistance Framework, as it provides priorities that are in line with our Development Strategy and other national development priorities.

And, finally, while the international community and the United Nations have essential roles to play in the coming months and years, Afghanistan also needs to have stronger cooperation with its neighbours. As has been widely recognized, this conflict is not limited to the borders of Afghanistan, but involves the entire region, and endangers people all over the world. Our enemies are not local, but regional, and they find sanctuary and support outside of Afghanistan. A full regional approach will be needed to combat them.

We have recently begun to move towards more positive regional interaction with Pakistan, particularly through trilateral arrangements with the United States, as well as with Turkey and Iran. There have been promising bilateral and multilateral advances towards better regional understanding as well. It is our hope that all regional stakeholders can recognize the mutual advantages of a stable, prosperous Afghanistan and will be involved in helping to confront our shared challenges in a sustainable, cooperative way.

In conclusion, we share the Secretary-General's assessment that we have an opportunity to make significant progress, if we maintain our new momentum and focus in the coming months. That effort will require broad and consistent international engagement going forward. If we can ensure transparent and open elections, increase security for the Afghan population, improve coordination and effectiveness of aid, strengthen Afghan institutions and constructively address the regional dimensions of the situation, we can clear a space on which to build a strong, sustainable Afghanistan.

Mr. Okuda (Japan): Since we know that today, Mr. President, marks the end of your tenure as Permanent Representative of Turkey and your long diplomatic career, allow me to take this opportunity to express, on behalf of my delegation, my heartfelt appreciation to you, Ambassador İlkin, for your tireless efforts to make the work of the Council as productive and effective as possible. I am sure that we will all remember your achievements long in the future, and we will certainly miss you.

At the outset, I would like to thank Mr. Kai Eide, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, for his comprehensive and informative briefing on the situation in Afghanistan. I also pay tribute to the his leadership and to the dedication of the United Nations Mission of Assistance in Afghanistan (UNAMA) staff, who are working under very difficult conditions.

By adopting resolution 1868 (2009) in March, the Security Council reaffirmed the role of the United Nations in Afghanistan and renewed its support for the endeavours of the Afghan people to achieve towards a stable and prosperous future. I strongly hope that today's meeting will be an occasion for the Council to demonstrate solidarity in expressing its continued commitment to the country, as well as its support for the role of UNAMA.

Since we met in this Chamber last March, the international commitment to Afghanistan has been reaffirmed on various occasions. Most notable of those was the Hague Conference, in which more than 80 countries and international organizations participated. Most recently, the Foreign Ministers of the G-8 gathered and had discussions with Afghanistan, Pakistan and other partners in Trieste, Italy, and pledged anew their steadfast support.

Individual pledges to strengthen assistance have also been made, including through the expansion of the deployment of both troops and civilians. Japan, for its part, provided about $300 million in additional assistance in March and began the dispatch of its civilians to a Provincial Reconstruction Team in May.

All those initiatives represent positive support for the efforts on the ground, and we welcome them. It is important that those commitments be implemented steadily and effectively and that they bring about actual progress.

In that regard, I would like first of all to emphasize the importance of ownership on the part of the Government and people of Afghanistan. I believe that the efforts of the Afghan Government since last year in areas such as police and agricultural reform are to be applauded. We hope to see further progress made in governance and other key areas. I also wish to stress that, in those efforts, attention should continue to be focused on both the central and the local governments.

Secondly, the importance of UNAMA's central coordinating role cannot be overstated. We are pleased to note that its cooperation with the International Security Assistance Force has increased. We also fully support the efforts of UNAMA to help identify priorities in reconstruction and development and to coordinate international assistance, such as the ongoing

mapping process as part of agricultural assistance. We urge donor countries and organizations to cooperate with such initiatives of UNAMA, so that our assistance can be implemented more effectively.

We are all aware of the significance of the upcoming presidential and provincial council elections. A huge responsibility lies on the shoulders of the Afghan people, who are responsible for the preparations for and conduct of the elections. We welcome the fact that the preparations have been brought forward thanks to the efforts of the Afghan authorities with the assistance of the international community. Let me reiterate that it is crucial that the elections be free, fair, inclusive and credible.

The international community shares responsibility, and we welcome the statements on the elections issued in Istanbul and Trieste by the Afghanistan-Pakistan International Support Group. The newly formed Government must achieve legitimacy by being elected through credible elections, so that it can garner support domestically as well as in the international community. Japan intends to dispatch election observer teams to help ensure that these goals are met.

For the elections to be credible, it must be assured that all candidates are able to campaign on a level playing field and that all those eligible to vote are permitted to exercise that right. Obviously, in this regard, security is the biggest challenge. We support the steps to be taken by the Afghan Government and the international partners to ensure a secure electoral process. Japan has pledged its support for the recently proposed plan for an interim increase in police personnel. Our $300 million disbursement also includes assistance equivalent to the salary of the entire police force for half a year.

Needless to say, the United Nations plays a significant role in the electoral process through technical and other assistance. We particularly support the efforts of the Special Representative to help ensure a fair campaign. It is encouraging that the guidelines issued by the Special Representative have been endorsed by a number of major candidates.

In this electoral process, the candidates were screened for eligibility through the programme to disband illegal armed groups. Besides its significance in the political process, the programme has contributed to improved security by producing tangible results in the dismantling of illegal armed groups and the collection of weapons, which Japan, as lead country in this area, acknowledges with satisfaction. It should also be noted that the development of acceptance of disbandment in the districts has made progress as well. It is Japan's intention to continue to assist Afghan efforts in this area, in ever-closer cooperation with UNAMA, in order to make certain that the progress in the disbandment process keeps pace with the capacity-building of the Afghan police force.

We have witnessed a growing recognition of the need to embrace a regional perspective, which we believe is of particular importance in order for the various initiatives in security, border control and development in Afghanistan to be effective. International assistance must be further coordinated with this approach in mind. The notion was reaffirmed at last week's G-8 meeting, which was also attended by Afghanistan and neighbouring countries. In this context, the initiatives of Afghanistan and its neighbours, including the Regional Economic Cooperation Conference, are encouraging. We also welcome recent international support initiatives such as the efforts of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Ankara Declaration process and the Dubai Process. Japan also has advanced its efforts based on this regional perspective, with undertakings including the hosting of the Pakistan donors conference in April and the launch of Japan-Iran Cooperation in Afghanistan announced in May.

Before concluding, I would like to stress once again the important role of the United Nations in meeting all of these challenges. Expectations are high. We are anxious to see the concrete developments that the work of UNAMA is expected to bring about, while understanding, at the same time, that they cannot be achieved overnight. It was on the basis of such expectations that the Council asked in its resolution for benchmarks to be developed, and Japan appreciates the Secretary-General's efforts in this regard. We also understand the necessity of strengthening UNAMA to meet such expectations among the people in Afghanistan as well as the international community. I take this opportunity to reaffirm Japan's unwavering support for the work of UNAMA.

Sir John Sawers (United Kingdom): I would like to begin by echoing the Ambassador of Japan in paying tribute to the President on his last day as President of the Council, which he has led with great precision and

authority, the last day of his time as Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations, and the last day of a very distinguished and long international career. We shall all miss him, and international diplomacy will be the poorer for his departure. We wish him a long and very rich retirement.

On the issue of the day, Afghanistan, let me begin by thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2009/323) and Special Representative Kai Eide for his briefing today. These reports are a very important part of our engagement with the work of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). In the last six months, we have seen UNAMA's role grow. We applaud its plans to move into more provinces, which will be key for delivering increased Afghan capacity at the subnational level and for delivery of international contributions well beyond Kabul and country-wide.

I said in March that this year will be decisive for Afghanistan. Both the report and today's briefing only serve to underline that view. The challenges facing Afghanistan remain serious, but we are moving forward and we applaud the progress made by the Afghan Government in areas such as agriculture and police reform.

The preparations for elections are on track, thanks in large part to the efforts of the Independent Election Commission of Afghanistan in concert with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UNAMA.

We welcome the progress on donor coordination, but we recognize that there is further progress to be made. We have long argued for consolidated support for the Government of Afghanistan closely aligned to the national development strategy. Ambassador Tanin has repeated this call again today, and we should heed it.

On counter-narcotics efforts, by continuing to support the Afghan Government's national drug control strategy, we are also making a difference. Over half of Afghanistan's provinces are now poppy-free, nation-wide poppy cultivation decreased 19 per cent last year, and significant investment is being made to deliver alternative livelihoods. All these are areas of progress, and we have seen coordination among regional countries also intensifying, which is welcome.

In April, the United Kingdom released an updated policy on Afghanistan and Pakistan, and Prime Minister Gordon Brown set out the United Kingdom's three objectives. The first objective is to prevent the return of Al-Qaida in Afghanistan and reduce violent extremism. The second objective is to help Afghanistan to become an effective and accountable State that is increasingly able to handle its own security and deliver basic services to its people. The third objective is to provide long-term, sustainable support for the Afghan national development strategy, particularly on governance, rule of law, human rights and poverty alleviation.

In all of these areas, UNAMA has a central role to play. We will not defeat extremism and defeat the insurgency if we cannot improve the daily lives of ordinary Afghans. UNAMA's work is vital to improving governance and helping build an effective Afghan State.

The presidential elections in Afghanistan are less than two months away. The security situation indicates that organizing the elections will be difficult, but, for the first time in over 30 years, the will of the Afghan people will be expressed through an elections process organized and delivered by the Afghan people themselves. We are working to help the Afghan Government ensure that those elections are credible, inclusive and secure. We encourage all the presidential candidates to set out their proposals clearly so that Afghans can make an informed choice.

I would also remind partners of the need for timely preparations for next year's parliamentary, council and district elections as well. UNAMA has shown commendable political leadership in the run up to the August elections, and we must all support Special Representative Eide and his team's work to deliver these preparations, not just this year but also in 2010.

We welcome the arrival of new troops in Afghanistan, especially in the south, as it will improve security, and, with a significant number of troops dedicated to training, it will help strengthen the Afghan national security forces. The key to lasting success in Afghanistan is to build up Afghan security forces so that they can take lead responsibility for delivering security to the Afghan people.

We must all continue to protect non-combatants from the effects of military action. We all deeply regret

any civilian casualties; each and every innocent life lost is a tragedy. Reducing civilian casualties remains a high priority for the NATO force. We welcome General McChrystal's early attention to these issues. Protecting the Afghan population is at the core of our international mission, which is in stark contrast to the Taliban-led insurgency, which, as the Special Representative has made clear, continues deliberately to target and kill Afghan civilians.

UNAMA's work is at the heart of the international effort in Afghanistan. We fully support the Mission as it uses the increased resources agreed last year to deliver its objectives more effectively and more widely. As UNAMA takes on an increasingly important role, the Council needs to pay attention to how we match the demands we make of the Mission with the resources it needs to deliver them. That will require clear decisions on the right priorities.

We look forward to seeing the work that UNAMA is doing to introduce benchmarks into its reporting. I was glad to hear from the Special Representative of the Secretary-General that that task is being taken seriously. It should not be seen as a bureaucratic chore. Benchmarks are a vital tool to target their work, measure the progress made and explain to the Afghan people and the international community what UNAMA is achieving. We are content to allow more time for that, on the understanding that we will see the results in the next report, in September.

The clear focus that benchmarks will provide will also help us to consider the merits of further requests for more resources, which the Special Representative of the Secretary-General has told us are in the pipeline.

May I close by saying how much the United Kingdom appreciates the work of Kai Eide and all of UNAMA's dedicated staff. The United Kingdom will continue to support them and the Afghan people and authorities as we collectively tackle the major challenges ahead.

Mr. Rugunda (Uganda): We would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2009/323). We would also like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Kai Eide for his briefing on the situation in Afghanistan.

We commend the central role that the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) continues to play in coordinating international action and assistance in support of the Afghan Government. We welcome UNAMA's efforts to expand its presence in the country in order to have a greater impact in carrying out its mandate in Afghanistan.

We have noted, and are concerned about the fact that, while there has been improvement in the security situation in some parts of the country, such as Kabul and neighbouring provinces, the number of security incidents and the level of violence have increased in comparison to the same period last year. The security forecast for the next quarter raises even more concerns, with an expected increase in the level of violence.

The elections scheduled for 20 August will be an important milestone in the efforts to restore democracy and achieve lasting stability and progress in Afghanistan. However, as the country enters the election campaign period, poor security conditions may make it difficult for the people in affected areas of the south and east of the country to freely exercise their franchise. Those conditions could also provide cover for election malpractice. It is therefore imperative that progress be made in creating suitable conditions for a successful election in Afghanistan, including in addressing factors constraining the ability of Afghan women to fully exercise their political rights. Failure in providing those conditions could lead to further disillusionment and apprehension among the Afghan public as well, a situation that must be prevented.

Building strong institutions remains critical for sustainable national development. We welcome the planned increase in Afghan Government leadership and ownership of the development process through the civilian surge. Attention should also be given to the speedy completion of the priority plan, as well as to mechanisms for the implementation of the civilian surge, which will facilitate the expansion of the Government's presence around the country.

The success of national development efforts critically depends on the availability of adequate and predictable resources. While progress is being made to align donor efforts behind the Afghan National Development Strategy and priorities, we encourage UNAMA to continue to work with the Government and donors to ensure coherence in the allocation of goods and resources to meet all development priorities, especially those that are currently underfunded.

Stability in Afghanistan is in the interests of Afghanistan itself, but also in the interests of the

countries of the region. Regional cooperation would provide enhanced opportunities for dealing with common challenges that cut across national borders while also generating momentum for economic growth in the country. In that regard, we welcome the various efforts that have been undertaken in the past three months to facilitate dialogue at different levels in — Moscow, Ankara, Washington and Tehran. We note that those efforts have underscored and encouraged serious commitment to joint efforts and action at the regional level to fight terrorism and counter the production of, and trafficking in, narcotics. We encourage all countries in the region to constructively work together to foster sustainable development and peace in the region.

The next few months will be complex and very critical for Afghanistan's future, its stability and its progress. The positive momentum that has emerged in spite of the difficult situation must be maintained. While there has been emphasis on capacity-building programmes in the security sector, a more focused strategy is needed where equal attention is given to well-funded and effective programmes for building civilian capacity and institutions in the country. The Afghan Government must, for its part, do its utmost to continue ongoing work with the support of UNAMA, building on the existing momentum generated by the election process.

The primary responsibility for peace and stability in the country is, and will remain, with the people of Afghanistan. However, support from the United Nations, regional and subregional actors and the wider international community will remain essential to reinforcing national efforts. National capacity development is an important element in that process. It will require deliberate steps in utilizing and developing existing national capacities.

We look forward to the finalization of the benchmarks and indicators, as decided in resolution 1868 (2009), that will facilitate more effective monitoring of the progress being made in the implementation of UNAMA's mandates and priorities.

As this is the last debate of the Council under your stewardship, Mr. President, I wish, on behalf of my delegation and on my own behalf, to thank you and compliment you on the invaluable contribution you have made since Turkey joined the Security Council. We have greatly valued your insight and frankness in our deliberations during the past few months. And we salute you for the excellent way you have steered our deliberations as President. We wish you every success in your future endeavours after more than four decades of a distinguished diplomatic career.

Mr. Mayr-Harting (Austria): On this very special day for you and for the Security Council, I would first like to join other colleagues in thanking and congratulating you, Mr. President, on the way you have conducted the work of the Council. In the past six months, I have greatly appreciated your outstanding professionalism, shrewdness and what I would call the Tacitus-like concision of your statements before the Council. I should also like to say that we greatly appreciated your continued insistence on the need for transparency in the work of the Council. We join others in wishing you all the best in your future endeavours.

Moving on to the item under discussion today, I wish to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Kai Eide for the frank assessment that he has given us today of the current situation and the challenges ahead, as well as for his continued dedication and commitment. I also wish to welcome the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, Ambassador Zahir Tanin, who is seated at this table.

Austria aligns itself with the statement to be made later in this debate by the representative of the Czech Republic on behalf of the European Union.

We share the assessment of the Secretary-General that supporting free, fair and credible elections is essential. The legitimacy of democratic institutions and the credibility of the international community in Afghanistan would be greatly enhanced in the eyes of the Afghan population by elections that are perceived as having been free and fair. We welcome the fact that, to date, the Independent Election Commission has adhered successfully to its timetable for the first Afghan-led election process. At the same time, we encourage the Commission to continue working closely with international experts.

Austria greatly appreciates the efforts of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) to support and promote a credible election process. In this context, we welcome the establishment of the Political Rights monitoring programme, in partnership with the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission, as an important step forward. We wish to commend, in particular, UNAMA's successful

efforts to encourage women to register as candidates for provincial council seats and its focus on factors that constrain the ability of women to exercise their political rights in full. At the same time, we view with some concern trends of increased violence against women and the recent introduction of draft legislation of a discriminatory nature.

Austria welcomes decisions by the European Union (EU) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to send election monitoring teams. We will participate in the proposed EU election observation mission, and will also make a financial contribution to the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights election support team. At the same time, we view the deployment of domestic observers as crucial in ensuring that a larger percentage of polling stations is covered.

At this juncture, the preparation for and organization of the first round of the elections on 20 August deserves priority attention. However — and this is sometimes forgotten — we believe that it is also essential to prepare carefully for the possibility of a second round of presidential elections in the fall of this year.

The provision of security in the course of the coming months, and in particular during the elections, will represent a great challenge. We share the concerns expressed by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General regarding the deterioration of the security situation, including the high toll of civilian casualties, which threatens to overshadow many positive achievements. While recognizing the complexity of the fight against the insurgency, we share the view of the Secretary-General that it is critical to avoid a situation where more troops lead to more civilian casualties and to behaviour that offends the population.

We are encouraged by the recent statements made by General McChrystal noting the absolute priority of avoiding civilian casualties. The Afghanization of relevant operations and, in more general terms, the ongoing reform and strengthening of the Afghan National Army and the Afghan National Police is of great relevance in this context.

Austria is currently examining the possibility of a contribution to EU and United Nations programmes focused on police and rule-of-law training activities. We are strong supporters of demining activities and have made a financial contribution towards that, allowing the deployment of three mine-clearance teams, which together are projected to clear high-priority mine-contaminated land in the central and northern regions of Afghanistan.

Afghan ownership is also of critical importance in the civilian field. We welcome the formulation by the Afghan Government of a comprehensive plan for the implementation of the civilian surge in follow-up to the Hague Conference. Investment in capacity-building, in the creation of sustainable jobs and incomes and in a lasting expansion of Government presence is essential in achieving sustainable progress for the benefit of the people of Afghanistan and the whole region. We are encouraged by the new mechanisms developed by the Afghan Ministry of Agriculture, which can help to increase aid effectiveness. Furthermore, the new Comprehensive Agriculture and Rural Development facility, which aims at increasing incentives for the cultivation of alternatives to poppy production, is a promising instrument.

Regional cooperation and coordination in the fight against illicit drug trafficking and supply is of great importance. As the recently published United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) *World Drug Report 2009* has highlighted, the decline of global opium poppy cultivation in 2008 was largely a result of a decrease in Afghanistan's cultivation area. Austria is currently supporting three UNODC projects in Afghanistan aimed at strengthening Afghanistan-Iran border controls, at capacity-building in the area of criminal justice and at fighting corruption. Austria is also a long-time supporter of the UNODC Terrorism Prevention Branch, which conducts several programmes aimed at capacity-building in Afghanistan and in the region.

In closing, I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his efforts to develop benchmarks in close consultation with the Afghan Government. We look forward to his report in September. In order to support the positive developments occurring in Afghanistan, we must not lose focus, and I also say this against the background of other regional developments. We must abide by the commitments and priorities set in Paris in June 2008, and reaffirmed at The Hague this year.

Mr. Heller (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): As we are aware of the fact, Sir, that this meeting marks the end of your presidency of the Security Council for the month of June and also represents the equivalent in your duties as Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations, I would like to join the others in expressing my gratitude for your distinguished career in your country's diplomatic service, which today comes to an end. I wish you every success in the future.

I thank Mr. Kai Eide, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, for introducing the report of the Secretary-General (S/2009/323) and his comments on the situation on the ground. We also welcome the presence of Ambassador Tanin and the statement he delivered earlier today.

We are concerned to see that the security situation on the ground has suffered serious setbacks. The increase in the number of incidents and the level of widespread violence, both in the capital and in neighbouring and southern provinces, have produced a volatile climate for everyone, combatants, civilians and international personnel alike. Mexico believes that guaranteeing the security of the population is one of the main challenges that Afghanistan faces in the short and medium term. Protecting the integrity of the most vulnerable populations, such as women and children, requires priority attention in accordance with the norms and principles of international law. Likewise, the security of humanitarian staff must also be promptly ensured.

In the light of the increase in civilian casualties, Mexico reiterates its condemnation of terrorism in all of its forms and manifestations. We vigorously condemn attacks against the civilian population and the acts of violence that have been directed against humanitarian staff and the United Nations on the ground.

We note the progress that has been made in the expansion of the Afghan National Army and the Afghan National Police. However, we urge that efforts be stepped up to urgently generate the capacities necessary to guarantee minimal security conditions for the civilian population. Similarly, we support all efforts made by national and international security forces to prevent collateral casualties in terms of civilian victims in the course of their military operations.

We also welcome the announcement concerning the increase in troops authorized by the Government of the United States within the framework of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), with the aim of strengthening its security capabilities and enhancing the training of the National Army and Police as well as improving the protection of the civilian population. Even though the central functions in the area of security have been assumed by ISAF, the presence and the comprehensive approach of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) is important in order to continue to support development and reconstruction activities in the country. One item that we think is crucial is the adoption, with the support of UNAMA and the international community, of all of the necessary measures to prevent the recruitment of children by armed groups and to bring about conditions conducive to their reintegration into a safe environment.

Furthermore, we praise the efforts of the Government of Afghanistan and the international community to make progress in the clearance and destruction of landmines and other explosive remnants of war in the country, bearing in mind the fact that those devices continue to represent a serious threat to the civilian population. Hence, it is necessary to provide additional support to mine-clearance programmes.

Mexico welcomes the results of the International Conference on Afghanistan, which took place on 31 March in The Hague, as a positive step to promote the commitment of the international community in favour of the development, strengthening of security and institutional capacity-building of Afghanistan and to provide attention to Afghan priorities.

Similarly, we welcome the adoption of the United Nations development assistance framework for Afghanistan, which was signed by the Government and the United Nations on 28 May, in order to define international participation and to improve coordination among all of the bodies and programmes of the United Nations in that country. Despite the insecurity and the prevailing violence, we must continue fostering national priorities through a comprehensive approach that will strengthen institutional capacities, the promotion of economic and social development, respect for human rights and strengthening of the rule of law, taking into account the regional dimension of many of the problems that affect that country. In that

respect, international assistance must adapt to Afghan structures and priorities.

The fight against organized crime and the illicit production and trafficking of narcotics is a priority for the stability of Afghanistan. We welcome the initiatives that have been promoted in that respect by the Special Conference on Afghanistan convened by the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia. We recognize that progress in dialogue and bilateral cooperation between Afghanistan and Pakistan and Iran could assist in tackling common challenges in the area of regional stability, such as the fight against terrorism, drug trafficking, organized crime, as well development and trade issues.

Within that framework, we support the efforts of the Government to reduce the production of opium in several provinces, as well as regional cooperation to develop a common front to tackle that phenomenon, which has global consequences. Similarly, we note the efforts made by the Government to fight corruption, in particular the establishment on 1 April of a specialized anti-corruption unit within the Office of the Attorney-General.

My delegation is also optimistic about the progress described in the report concerning the preparation for the elections next August. We think important progress has been made, not only in the immediate electoral process, but also in promoting a democratic culture in the country. In that connection, special attention should be given to electoral rolls and the final list of candidates, which have been prepared on time and without any major security incidents.

We welcome the establishment of the Electoral Complaints Commission and the establishment of the Verification of Political Rights campaign set up by UNAMA, in conjunction with the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission. We urge all of the political actors in Afghanistan to cooperate with UNAMA and the security forces as well as the United Nations Development Programme's UNDP-ELECT to make sure that the next elections will take place in a climate of security, transparency and respect for the human rights of the voters, in particular the full exercise of political rights by women.

It is important to take advantage of the impetus generated by the electoral process to carry out long-term strategic planning with specific measures that would strengthen the rule of law and contribute to creating trust among the population in their institutions, as well as in combating impunity. Undoubtedly, the holding of elections is an opportunity to write an entirely new chapter that will favour national reconciliation and strengthen sovereignty and democracy in Afghanistan.

Mr. Vilović (Croatia): Allow me to begin by expressing my appreciation and that of my delegation for your contribution, Sir, to the work of the Security Council during the past six months and particularly, for the manner in which you led the Council during your presidency this month. But professionalism, efficiency, transparency and impartiality have characterized you throughout your rich career. I wish you all the best in your future endeavours.

Let me start by thanking Mr. Kai Eide, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his comprehensive briefing and for presenting the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan (S/2009/323). In the same vein, my delegation would also like to thank Mr. Eide for the leadership he has provided under extremely harsh circumstances. We also wish to welcome Mr. Tanin, Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, to the Council table.

Croatia aligns itself with the statement to be delivered later by the Permanent Representative of the Czech Republic on behalf of the European Union. Allow me here to make some brief additional remarks.

The crucial political moment of the year that will have a significant impact on Afghanistan's future — the presidential and legislative elections — is fast approaching. Croatia is encouraged by the adherence of the Independent Election Commission to the election timetable, especially regarding voter registration and candidate vetting. We particularly welcome the growing number of women registered as provincial candidates, as compared to the elections held in 2005. It is of utmost importance to secure the full participation of all Afghans in the upcoming elections, as well as its absolute credibility.

In that context, Croatia strongly supports the role of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in the election process, especially the technical and political incentives it has provided in close cooperation with the relevant Afghan institutions, as we believe that those incentives will help considerably in creating conditions and an

atmosphere conducive to free, fair and transparent elections.

In addition, we welcome the appointment of the Electoral Complaints Commission, as well as the decisions by the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe to send an observation mission and election support team to monitor the conduct and outcome of the elections.

Notwithstanding the positive momentum, Croatia is concerned by the deterioration of the security situation in the country, especially in the south and the east, as well as by the expansion of the insurgency in the previously calm north and the fresh influx of foreign fighters into the country. On the other hand, we note with satisfaction that further progress in coordinating key Afghan security institutions is making headway, that the security situation in and around Kabul has improved and that there has been a sharp decrease in the number of aid workers killed or maimed during the reporting period. We support the further Afghanization of security operations and the continued effort to avoid civilian casualties.

It is important to stress that, although we see the military effort as an important and integral part of the global solution in Afghanistan, we agree with the overall assessment that military means alone will not bring final success in the country. A carefully planned and attentively implemented national reconciliation programme based on respect for the constitution and relevant Security Council resolutions could, in our opinion, greatly contribute to that aim.

Croatia welcomes the progress made in some of the priority areas identified as essential for Afghanistan's long-term economic growth, especially agriculture, private sector development and higher education. In that context, we welcome the establishment of much-needed new mechanisms aimed at better coordination and coherent allocation of resources, including the development assistance database set up in order to increase aid effectiveness and to coordinate the flow of donor resources.

Furthermore, we welcome the newly established United Nations Development Assistance Framework, which sets the course for United Nations action in Afghanistan from 2010 to 2013 and creates a common fund, with the main aim of addressing the imbalance in assistance provided to provinces.

Croatia strongly supports the so-called civilian surge aimed at massive capacity- and institution-building and the comprehensive plan put forward in that regard by the Afghan Government following the Hague Conference. We share the view that that new surge has to be Afghan-led and primarily focused on the subnational level. In that context, we eagerly await the finalization of the Government's priority plan and implementing mechanisms as necessary tools for the full implementation of the aforementioned strategy.

In our view, the fight against corruption remains one of the main tasks for the Afghan authorities. We therefore welcome the establishment of a specialized anti-corruption unit, as well as the development of anti-corruption plans by the recently created High Office of Oversight for the Implementation of the Anti-Corruption Strategy.

The regional dimension of the problems in Afghanistan cannot be overestimated. It is self-evident that military action in Afghanistan needs to carefully take into account and to adequately deal with political and military situations in neighbouring countries.

At the same time, Afghanistan's economic growth is inconceivable without substantial regional coordination and cooperation. Croatia welcomes the outcomes of several recent conferences devoted to regional cooperation and their efforts to further mobilize donor support for Afghanistan. We are similarly pleased to see progress in bilateral relations between Afghanistan and its neighbours, especially Pakistan.

We fully understand UNAMA's current focus on the elections and its determination to include all relevant stakeholders in the development of the benchmarks, as requested by resolution 1868 (2009). We support UNAMA's endeavours to undertake wide consultations on that issue, and we look forward to a finalized set of benchmarks, to be presented in the next report of the Secretary-General, due in September.

Bearing in mind the importance and magnitude of the tasks assigned to UNAMA, Croatia supports the further strengthening of UNAMA, as well as its intention to further expand and establish offices in all provinces of Afghanistan.

Mr. Dolgov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I hope that you, Mr. President, will allow me to begin my statement not by exclusively addressing

the important Afghan issue. I would like to join my colleagues in expressing our gratitude to you not only for convening today's meeting, but also, above all, for your eminently effective and productive work as President of the Security Council and as Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations. Your activity has been truly extremely fruitful. You indeed know the very warm feelings that we, the entire Russian delegation, the Russian Federation, have with respect to you and your diplomatic activities. We believe that that standard of diplomatic work has most clearly raised the bar very high.

Once again, we would like to wish you every success and all the best in your future activities, and we hope that you will always remember the many friends you have left in New York, not least the Russian ones.

We are grateful to Mr. Eide for his assessments and for his customary substantive and frank analysis of the situation in Afghanistan. We commend his personal contribution to the international effort, under the auspices of the United Nations, in helping to bring about a settlement in Afghanistan and the post-conflict rebuilding of that country.

Unfortunately, despite a number of positive developments in Afghanistan that were noted in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2009/323) and were mentioned by Mr. Eide today, so far the situation in that country continues to see very clear destabilizing tendencies. Specifically, as before, we are particularly concerned by the fact that the efforts by the Afghan authorities and the international military presence have yet to bring about any truly serious improvements in the security sphere. Unfortunately, so far, there has been no stability in the positive improvements that do exist, nor have those positive steps been made irreversible. In that area, clearly much remains to be done, including in terms of the international military presence and their mandates. Unfortunately, there continues to be an increase in the terrorist activities of the Taliban, Al-Qaida and other extremists, which undermine the basis of the Afghan nationhood and significantly hinder stabilization and construction.

With regard to the armed fight against the Taliban, we are seriously concerned by the current ongoing cases of loss of civilian life owing to the international military operations. We listened to the assessments made today by Mr. Eide, and we agree with them. We advocate meticulous investigation of all related incidents and stepping up efforts to prevent them in the future.

We acknowledge the work being done by the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan and by the Coalition Forces to prevent the loss of civilian life during military operations. We recognize that work, but we note that, unfortunately, those efforts have so far not been sufficiently effective.

We expect the agreement between NATO and the Ministry of Defence of Afghanistan to have a practical effect on the coordination of joint actions. We support the proposal of the Secretary-General with regard to the need to Afghanize the special anti-terrorist operations. We are convinced that, without the active involvement of the Afghans themselves, it will not be possible to eradicate extremism in Afghanistan.

We fully share the view of the Secretary-General to the effect that, if we cannot maintain those positive trends so far seen that have been mentioned today, including shifting the focus to the civilian reconstruction of Afghanistan, strengthening local governments and enhancing the effectiveness of international assistance, the positive momentum will be lost, and the Afghans themselves and the work of the entire international community in Afghanistan could be set back for years. The goal is to prevent that through collective efforts, and the coordinating role of the United Nations in that regard is extremely important.

We support the goal of national reconciliation in Afghanistan. At the same time, that process should not take place to the detriment of achieving long-term stability in the country, nor should it run counter to the relevant Security Council decisions, specifically in terms of carrying out the sanctions regime with respect to the Taliban and Al-Qaida. That must not happen. Those Security Council decisions must be fully implemented by all.

If the Afghan leadership believes it appropriate to seek contacts with the moderate wing of the Taliban, such a dialogue should be carried out only with those who truly lay down their arms, recognize the Government and the constitution of Afghanistan and renounce their ties with Al-Qaida. We are categorically against any arrangements with ringleaders of the Taliban or other terrorist and extremist organizations. Any attempt to establish dialogue with them would undermine the sanctions regime imposed by the

Security Council. Again, we intend to continue to demand full compliance with that regime.

While not downplaying the importance of the holding of presidential and provincial elections in conformity with the generally accepted requirements of democracy, we consider that there is a need to pay particular attention to the post-election period. The principal aim today is to try to involve the largest possible number of Afghans in the electoral process and, in general, in the political settlement and the reconstruction of Afghanistan. We welcome the work of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in that regard and expect the Mission to continue, as in previous years, to provide solid and effective assistance in conducting the electoral process in line with international standards.

We continue to believe that the international presences' counter-narcotics efforts are still falling short. That task is ever more pressing, as drug trafficking continues to provide the primary financial underpinning of the terrorists in Afghanistan — and, I would add, beyond. At several levels, Russia actively supports the fight against the scourge of illicit drug production. In combating terrorism, drug trafficking and organized crime, we are certain that we must make more active use of the capacities of regional organizations that have proven their effectiveness in these spheres. These include in particular the Collective Security Treaty Organization and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

An important political stimulus for setting up counter-narcotics and counter-terrorism belts around Afghanistan was provided by the event held on 27 March in Moscow: the Special Conference on Afghanistan, convened under the auspices of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. We are grateful to the Secretary-General for his effective participation in that Conference. The Conference's outcome was aimed at stepping up practical international cooperation in the counter-narcotics and counter-terrorism effort. The measures that were adopted included a comprehensive analysis of the situation and a variety of joint efforts, including manoeuvres and the training of specialists to meet the needs of law-enforcement agencies in Afghanistan.

Russia is interested in the development of Afghanistan into a prosperous, democratic and stable State, and our practical efforts are aimed at helping achieve that goal through carrying out joint projects in the areas of industry, transportation, communications and infrastructure. We are pleased, for example, that the volume of trade between Russia and Afghanistan grew by 12 per cent last year, to a total of some $400 million. That is a positive trend, and Moscow intends to continue engaging in serious endeavours with our Afghan partners in this sphere. Clearly, we shall continue to provide the friendly Afghan people with necessary humanitarian assistance.

Mr. Hernández-Milian (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): On this final day of Turkey's current presidency of the Security Council, I join others in congratulating you, Sir, on your successful diplomatic performance at the United Nations. We wish you every success in the future.

My delegation is grateful for the convening of this debate on the situation in Afghanistan. We take note of the briefing provided by Mr. Kai Eide, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan. We also welcome the presence among us today of Ambassador Tanin.

We wish at the outset to acknowledge the efforts of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) to help strengthen political stability and attain the overall economic, social and development objectives of Afghanistan. We support UNAMA's activities, which, as the Special Representative has noted, can be summed up under three interconnected categories: security strategy, development strategy and political strategy. It is crucial to work in harmony with those strategies in order to strengthen the rule of law. Carrying out these tasks should be accompanied by efforts to fight corruption and to prevent impunity from prevailing. In our view, the fight against narcotics and other drugs is also important.

We take note of the various international efforts that have taken place since our previous debate on Afghanistan (see S/PV.6094). These duly reflect the outcomes of the Paris Conference of June 2008 and, in particular, the Hague Conference of March this year. We are aware of the vital importance for the stability of Afghanistan of obtaining firm, united support from the international community. In that regard, we highlight the role that UNAMA is playing in coordinating the various international cooperation efforts. We welcome in particular mechanisms aimed at ensuring the

appropriate transfer of international funds and other resources. We urge that such processes be carried out with transparency and effectiveness. We also welcome all endeavours that help maintain a climate of regional stability. In that regard we support the talks that have taken place between Afghanistan and neighbouring States.

My delegation is concerned at the increase in the number of security incidents in Afghanistan, which poses a threat to the country's stability. We cannot fail to condemn all violence, which runs counter to the quest for lasting peace in Afghanistan. My country continues to be concerned about collateral damage that has taken place, with direct effects on the civilian population. We warn and are concerned about the number of civilian victims and the attacks against United Nations facilities, humanitarian personnel and educational institutions. The right — in particular of girls — to education must be respected.

The fact that women and children are victims of the escalation of violence deserves special mention, and we urge Council members to endorse the conclusions of the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Afghanistan (S/2008/695). It is crucial to implement the resolutions that have been adopted on the protection of civilians. International humanitarian law must prevail and must be respected by all parties.

Costa Rica is clear about the importance of the electoral process that has begun in Afghanistan. We hope that the elections will be free, fair and competitive. We hope that the opportunity to elect leaders will strengthen internal democracy and the diversity of political expression within the system. We call for suitable international monitoring, which would make it possible to certify the outcome of the process. The international community must ensure that electoral stability is preserved in Afghanistan, for the elections could become a choice target for those seeking to destabilize Afghanistan and instigate violence against its people. In the context of these elections, the safety and freedom of the civilian population must be guaranteed.

Last March, when the Security Council extended the mandate of UNAMA for one year, the Mission was encouraged to redouble its efforts to meet certain benchmarks in its mandate, such as ensuring progress towards peace and development. Despite the practical obstacles on the road to compliance, we urge the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to step up his work to achieve these tasks.

Finally, my country is closely studying the three major shifts to which the Chapter X, "Observations", of the report of the Secretary-General (S/2009/323) refers: the increased emphasis on civilian efforts alongside military ones; a new focus on what is viewed as proper and necessary democratic governance; and the alignment of international cooperation behind key sectors for the political and economic development of Afghanistan. The common emphasis of those three interlinked areas poses a challenge to the country's institutions. The future of Afghanistan as well as its stability could depend on this achievement, so we urge UNAMA to continue its efforts in the area of coordination to help to carry out this agenda in order to achieve the peacebuilding and development that is sought by the Afghan people.

Mr. Dabbashi (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): Mr. President, since this is the last Council meeting in which you are participating in your capacity as the Permanent Representative of your brotherly country, permit me to add my voice to the colleagues who have preceded me and commend the laudable qualities that you have demonstrated and the constructive cooperation that have prevailed in the course of your leadership of your delegation. We also laud your positive contribution to the work of the Council. By the same token, I would like to thank you for the excellent manner with which you have steered the deliberations of the Council. On my behalf and on behalf of other members of the Council, I wish you health, happiness and success in your future activities.

I would also like to extend my thanks to Mr. Kai Eide for his comprehensive briefing and commend the efforts he and all the members of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) are expending to assist the Afghan people despite all the difficulties and challenges that they are facing. I wish also to welcome the statement made by His Excellency Ambassador Tanin, the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan.

The reports of the Secretary-General since 2005 have predicted the deterioration of the security situation in Afghanistan year in and year out. This past year has been no exception. The report of the Secretary-General before us (S/2009/323) makes

numerous references to new record numbers of incidents since the beginning of this year. In paragraph 18, for example, the report indicates that the number of security incidents rose by 43 per cent. The number of such incidents rose above the 1,000 mark in last May alone. The report also predicts the possibility of increasing levels of violence in the forthcoming period.

Meanwhile, international pledges and promises to Afghanistan have, unfortunately, been declining, particularly with regard to the implementation of the Afghan National Development Strategy, which is made clear in paragraph 25 of the report. We are gravely concerned that the day will come when the international community will turn its back once again on Afghanistan. We hope that that will not happen.

Once again, we would like to state that the use of force alone will not lead to security and stability in Afghanistan. We believe that the proposal calling for increasing the number of civilian experts to support the Afghan Government and build Afghan capacity is a step in the right direction and must be carried out as soon as possible.

We also look forward to more inclusive reviews of peace and broader strategies in Afghanistan based on the principle of comprehensive dialogue with all those who accept dialogue as a means of promoting national reconciliation, achieving understanding among all sectors of the Afghan people, and realizing development.

On the other hand, there is a pressing need for to strengthen the role and mandate of UNAMA and make the necessary resources available to it. It is also necessary to support the wider presence and ensure effective contributions by United Nations agencies, in particular in development and reconstruction projects in Afghanistan, with a view to paving the way for the withdrawal of foreign troops, which is a sine qua non for achieving national reconciliation.

We would like to express our satisfaction at the statement made by the representative of Afghanistan regarding the progress made in the areas of infrastructure, education, agriculture and health services. We also hope that the international community will continue its support in financing those sectors.

Despite the recurrent tragic incidents perpetrated by international troops against civilians in Afghanistan and despite repeated appeals to take the measures required to prevent their repetition, the incidents of killing civilians continue in a deeply disconcerting manner. It is enough here to refer to the incident that took place in the Bala Baluk district on 4 May 2009, which led to the deaths of 140 civilians according to Afghan Government sources. Recurrence of such incidents prompts us to question the establishment of rules and procedures by the international troop command to prevent such tragic incidents and their consequences. It is urgent that fair and impartial investigations of these incidents be conducted and those responsible for them be prosecuted.

We wish to express our satisfaction at the manner in which preparations for elections have been made, as well as the consensus reached by the Afghan people on this question. We wish here to commend the role played by Mr. Kai Eide and the United Nations Assistance Mission. We believe that the success of elections depends on the wide participation of the Afghan people, on the integrity of the process and on non-interference from outside in the election results.

In conclusion, we look forward to the report of the Secretary-General evaluating progress in implementing the mandate and priorities of UNAMA to be presented next September.

Mr. Ripert (France) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, at the outset, let me express our deep gratitude to you for the manner in which you have guided our work. You have demonstrated talent and exceptional mastery under very trying circumstances. As you now prepare to leave New York, Sir, I would like to express to you our admiration and our gratitude and personally convey to you the expression of my friendship. I hope that, as we say in French, the winds will be favourable to you and that life will be beautiful for you, Ambassador İlkin.

The Permanent Representative of the Czech Republic will soon make a statement on behalf of the European Union. France endorses that statement. I would like to provide several additional comments, after also having thanked Ambassador Tanin for his presentation.

First, I would like to commend the tireless efforts of Mr. Kai Eide to ensure better consistency in the international efforts in Afghanistan under the auspices of the United Nations. He has greatly contributed personally to the momentum and the increased

mobilization of the international community, which has allowed the United Nations to engage itself, particularly since the Paris Conference, as a key player in coordination of international efforts.

The 20 August elections should be an opportunity for Afghans to freely and democratically express their choice with regard to the direction they want to give their country. In order to ensure the full legitimacy and universal acceptance of the candidates elected to lead the country, the electoral process must be transparent, fair and credible. To that end, every candidate should, in particular, be able to campaign while enjoying the same access to the media and the country. I know that is one of the Special Representative's concerns. As Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner emphasized in Kabul in May during his meetings with the main candidates, they must also feel individually responsible for the proper conduct of the elections.

The responsibility for the holding of the elections belongs first and foremost to the Afghans themselves. But the United Nations has an important role to play in assisting them. We trust that the Special Representative of the Secretary-General will continue down the path he has embarked upon and provide his vigilant assistance to the electoral process.

Continuing the work to rebuild the country will depend upon the success of the elections. As the Special Representative has pointed out, significant progress was made in a number of areas in the course of the past year. That progress must now be consolidated. In particular, I should like to refer to the increased strength of the Afghan National Army. The progressive handover to Afghan forces of responsibility for security in the Kabul region, which began in August 2008 and in which the French contingent was especially involved, has led to an improvement of the security situation in that region. That is proof that "Afghanization" works and is continuing.

A new element has been the renewed effort to reform and strengthen the police. In that connection, President Sarkozy has taken the decision to involve the French Gendarmerie in tasks in Afghanistan related to training and mentoring the Afghan National Police. That effort is part of the future deployment of the European Union's gendarmerie force, which will be particularly suited to provide operational training to the Afghan police to prepare it to take over military activities on the ground.

We have taken note of the progress referred to by the Secretary-General in the area of coordinating international assistance, even though there is still much to do. In that regard, we look forward with interest to the outcome of the work being done by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) to develop benchmarks and criteria to measure results. Those indicators will be a useful tool in encouraging international partners and the Afghan Government to fully commit themselves to the effective implementation of the commitments undertaken in Paris and Bucharest, and later reaffirmed at The Hague.

We have also been interested to learn of the wish of the Secretary-General that new resources be allocated to UNAMA. We understand his desire to be able to count on the necessary capacities as soon as possible, especially with regard to the coordination of assistance. We shall therefore keep an open mind in considering the requests to be made by the Secretariat.

Developments in the area of human rights continue to be a source of great concern. Afghan authorities should, with the support of the international community, increase their efforts in that regard. I know that is a concern of the Special Representative as well. The issue of women's rights in particular should continue to be a priority of the Afghan Governments.

I should also like to reiterate our ongoing concern about the issue of civilian casualties, primarily caused by deliberate attacks by the Taliban and other extremist groups. However, France continues to be aware that there is still a need to intensify efforts by both Government and international forces in that regard.

The momentum in strengthening regional cooperation was once again in evidence at the recent Trieste meeting on Afghanistan and its neighbours. We should collectively ensure the implementation of the commitments made in recent months in the areas referred to by the Special Representative at Trieste, in particular with regard to railway infrastructure and energy.

Despite the individual characteristics of both countries, there is also a need to develop a coordinated approach to Afghanistan and Pakistan that addresses the many common challenges that exist. Allow me to take this opportunity to commend the determination of

Pakistani officials in the fight under way in the Swat Valley. The Government of Pakistan can count on France's solidarity in that fight, which should focus on all armed extremist groups active on Pakistani territory and which we know must be part of a long-term comprehensive strategy.

The stabilization of Afghanistan and the region as a whole is a priority for us all. It is for that reason that, for two years now, France has worked to substantially strengthen its military commitment in Afghanistan. We are aware of the need to for a comprehensive approach, and we want to help to put one in place by committing as fully as possible. We have also significantly strengthened our political and civilian commitment by massively increasing our 2009 reconstruction assistance, which will amount to €45 million. Afghanistan can rely on France's tireless commitment alongside the United Nations.

Ms. Rice (United States of America): It gives me great pleasure to join my colleagues in thanking you, Sir, for your extraordinary leadership as President of the Security Council, for your distinguished career and for the many contributions you have made — not only to your Government but to the relationship between our two countries, given your service in Washington — as well as for the tremendous wisdom, friendship and leadership that you have shown throughout your tenure here. We — and I — will miss you enormously. We wish you all the best. I hope we all have an open invitation to come and see you.

I want to begin also by thanking Special Representative Kai Eide for his comprehensive briefing today and for all of his exceptional efforts as head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).

The United States strongly supports UNAMA and its pursuit, together with the international community and especially with the Government of Afghanistan, of the goals set out in resolution 1868 (2009). Much work remains for all of us to do as we help the Afghan Government to better serve and protect its people.

On the heels of the launch of the United States own comprehensive new strategy in Afghanistan, the Hague ministerial meeting and the Paris Conference earlier this month, the United States welcomes the Secretary-General's first quarterly report (S/2009/323) on the situation in Afghanistan. As the Secretary-General indicates, the security situation remains challenging. But our partnership is indeed making progress as we work to address key security, humanitarian, human rights and governance concerns on the ground. At the Hague ministerial, the international community spoke with a strong and united voice: UNAMA will continue to play a key role in Afghanistan's security and development. The international community clearly put UNAMA in the lead for coordinating international action and assistance in support of the Government of Afghanistan.

As the Council knows, President Obama has made Afghanistan a top national security priority. Our goals are clear: to disrupt, defeat and dismantle Al-Qaida and to build up the Afghan Government's capacity to secure its people and its territory. UNAMA is doing outstanding work, and it will remain key to our common efforts.

In that light, permit me to touch on a few critical areas.

Afghanistan's presidential and provincial elections on 20 August will be a critical milestone in the Government of Afghanistan's efforts to expand governance. The elections offer the Afghan Government an opportunity to give its citizens a voice and to underscore to the international community its ongoing drive to strengthen democracy and good governance in the country. The international community and the United Nations are working hard with the Independent Election Commission to help make sure that those election-related efforts succeed. We must all make that our top priority in the weeks ahead. Let me note in that regard that the United States has given $120 million to the United Nations-administered donor fund for the elections. We call on all other donors to rapidly deliver on their pledges as well.

The United States does not support or oppose any particular presidential or provincial council candidate. Instead, we support the right of the Afghan people to choose their own leaders. That is why we are working with Afghan electoral authorities and the United Nations to help Afghans ensure a credible, secure and inclusive electoral process. The United States applauds efforts by UNAMA towards that goal. We welcome the establishment of the Political Rights monitoring programme, which will watch the protection of the freedom of expression, association, peaceful assembly and movement. We will also remain vigilant for cases

of intimidation, partiality and discrimination, and we encourage the Government of Afghanistan to fully enforce its decree on non-intervention in the election affairs of 2009.

The United States also welcomes the efforts of UNAMA to encourage Afghan women to participate in the political process, as both candidates and voters. We are working in parallel to empower women and end gender discrimination in Afghanistan. Allow me to note that President Obama's Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues, Melanne Verveer, completed a trip to Afghanistan just yesterday. While in the country, she promoted the launch of a $27 million grants programme to support gender equality by strengthening Afghan-led civil society organizations, particularly through providing technical assistance and smaller grants to Afghan non-governmental organizations.

UNAMA will only be as effective as its resources and presence throughout Afghanistan will allow. Expanding the presence of UNAMA in Afghanistan's regions and provinces, as called for in resolution 1868 (2009), is also essential.

We welcome stronger leadership by UNAMA in donor coordination, and we have committed ourselves to new levels of cooperation and transparency as we work with UNAMA and other donors. It is critical to coordinate capitals' preparation of their 2009 to 2013 assistance plans with the Government of Afghanistan as well as among donors. Donor-implementation meetings at the international level would help reach this goal, and such efforts would be a useful supplement to coordination in the field. We must help donors align their high-level plans and funding requests with Afghan priorities.

The proposed civilian increase to implement an enhanced, targeted, capacity-building programme comes in direct response to the Afghan Government's requests and geographic priorities. UNAMA must lie at the heart of efforts to coordinate the international aspects of the civilian increase, but the Afghan Government must also take ownership of that increase for it to be effective. Afghanistan needs a dramatic increase of civilian expertise to help develop key systems and institutions, extend basic infrastructure and create lawful economic alternatives to poppy production. On counter-narcotics, the United States recently announced that it is phasing out eradication and channelling significantly more resources into agriculture, interdiction and public information efforts.

Allow me to single out a creative programme that will also support the work of UNAMA, that is, the United Nations efforts to support the Afghan economy through, in the Secretary-General's words, its

> "local procurement campaign with members of the Government, donors and a number of Afghan private-sector suppliers. This campaign is intended to encourage the international community to buy Afghan products and reduce reliance on more expensive imports" (S/2009/323, para. 35).

The United States is very supportive of efforts to expand bilateral and regional trade, including more United States purchases from Afghan producers and businesses. My Government will also do its part to increase regional trade through the launch of a regional infrastructure and trade development initiative and by encouraging Afghanistan and Pakistan to conclude an updated transit trade treaty.

We must also do more to develop Afghan agriculture, which will require better technology, marketing, building of infrastructure, irrigation, rural electrification, cold storage and roads from farms to markets. We should all be working together with the people and Government of Afghanistan to deliver the basic needs and infrastructure necessary to improve the lives of the 76 per cent of Afghans who live in rural areas.

Finally, my Government would be remiss if it did not comment on the report's discussion of civilian casualties. The United States deeply regrets any injury or loss of life among innocent Afghans from operations involving United States forces and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). Any loss of innocent human life is tragic. We try to promptly provide humanitarian assistance to affected communities after incidents occur. We take all reports of such incidents seriously, and we will continue to conduct thorough, joint investigations with the Afghan Government to determine exactly what happened in each incident involving allegations of civilian casualties.

United States and international forces take extensive precautions to avoid loss of life among Afghan civilians, as well as international and Afghan forces, during operations against insurgents and terrorists. We understand that civilian casualties undermine Afghan public and government backing for all that we do together. In fact, shortly after assuming

command of the United States forces in Afghanistan and ISAF on 14 June, General Stanley McChrystal announced that reducing civilian casualties will be a top priority as he pursues the military efforts necessary to provide a secure environment in which Afghanistan's society and Government can be strengthened.

But we must not forget that, as we pursue these goals, we are fighting against an enemy — the Taliban and other militants — that employs appalling tactics, including using child soldiers as suicide bombers and using civilians as human shields. Most civilian causalities in Afghanistan, as the Special Representative just said, are caused by insurgents, not by the international forces working to improve the capacity of the Afghan Government to protect the Afghan people.

The international community has made UNAMA a guiding force in achieving our goals in Afghanistan. The United States stands steadfast in its support for the Afghan people as they seek to overcome the challenges of the past 30 years and work with the international community to defeat a common enemy. We must now work together to succeed in Afghanistan for the sake of the Afghan people, for the sake of the region and for the sake of international peace and security.

Mr. Liu Zhenmin (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): First of all, I wish to congratulate Turkey on such a successful presidency of the Security Council this month. I wish to thank you, Mr. President, for your outstanding contribution. The presidency of the Security Council is something that all diplomats aspire to. We hope that your work and life during this month will be a long-lasting legacy for you. We also wish you every success in all of your future endeavours.

The Chinese delegation would like to welcome the report of the Secretary-General (S/2009/323). We would like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Kai Eide for his briefing. We appreciate the efforts undertaken by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) under difficult conditions for the peace, stability and development of Afghanistan. We also wish to welcome the statement made by the representative of Afghanistan, Ambassador Tanin.

The upcoming elections will be a major event in the political life of Afghanistan this year. We are pleased to see that, despite multiple challenges, preparations for the Afghan elections have been on track thus far. We trust that the Afghan people will apply their wisdom to the proper resolution of issues relating to the elections and, through the elections, promote social cohesion and stability and enhance the Government's capacity for governance in all fields. Ensuring a smooth election process will be of critical importance. This will lay an important foundation for maintaining political stability in Afghanistan and achieving peaceful reconstruction.

Recently, the Afghan peace process and domestic reconstruction have registered good progress and are moving towards the goal of steady development. But the security situation remains worrisome. We hope that the Afghan Government, the Afghan National Army and the Afghan National Police will, with the assistance of the international community, continuously enhance their capacity-building so as to independently assume the responsibility of safeguarding national security and social stability.

The key to securing lasting peace in Afghanistan is economic development. The international community should increase its input in Afghan economic reconstruction; provide assistance to Afghanistan in agriculture, education, health and other fields; support improvements in its infrastructure; advance positive social development; and effectively help the Afghan people improve and raise their living standards so as to address the factors causing social instability at their roots.

We support the continued leading and coordinating role of the United Nations in assisting the reconstruction of Afghanistan. We support UNAMA in further enhancing its relationship with the Government of Afghanistan, the International Security Assistance Force and all donors, and in further advancing its monitoring and coordinating role.

Having gone through so many trials and tribulations, the Afghan people eagerly look forward to embarking on the road to peace, stability and development aspirations that are shared by all countries of the world. That calls for continued painstaking efforts on the part of the Afghan Government and people, as well as vigorous support from the international community.

As a friendly neighbour of Afghanistan, China stands ready to continue to assist Afghanistan to the best of its ability, actively engage in the Afghan

reconstruction process, and work tirelessly for lasting peace in Afghanistan.

Mr. Bui The Giang (Viet Nam): I thank you very much, Sir, for convening this meeting. While there are only several hours remaining before the official conclusion of your presidency for the month, I wish to join other colleagues in congratulating you and your team on the excellence with which you have lead and conducted the work of the Council throughout this month. I also wish you all the best of health and happiness as you are about to leave us, and we will certainly miss you a lot.

I also thank Mr. Kai Eide, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his updated and straightforward briefing, and particularly for his tireless and productive endeavours on the ground. I thank Ambassador Zahir Tanin of Afghanistan for his statement to the Council.

It is truly heartening to learn of the major positive developments in many fields in Afghanistan in the past three months. As the centre of both national and international political attention, the upcoming presidential and provincial council elections have gone through the very difficult phase of voter registration without serious security incidents. The date of elections has been determined and the list of candidates finalized, and the powers of the President after 22 May have been endorsed by the Supreme Court.

Efforts to expand the Afghan National Army and to reform and strengthen the Afghan National Police, coupled with preparations for the establishment of a social monitoring mechanism with a view to ensuring the role of elected organs and civil society in overseeing police performance at the local level, are also commendable. In the field of governance, progress is visible in the fight against corruption and in the enhancement of administrative accountability and capacity-building, thus giving rise to the civilian surge which is aimed at extending the Government's presence to the whole country, avoiding duplication and creating greater efficiency among existing governance structures.

We acknowledge the closer and more effective regional cooperation Afghanistan has enjoyed during the past three months, which is pivotal in helping to solve the conflict, combat cross-border crime and drug trafficking, and generate economic growth in the country. We appreciate the continued assistance of the international community to the Afghan Government and people. We especially commend the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan for its central role in better coordinating international action and assistance.

Against that backdrop, we remain concerned by the continued deteriorating insecurity and increased levels of violence in Afghanistan. The expanded fighting and insurgency activities in previously stable areas, the intensified intimidation, abductions and assassinations, and the continued deliberate targeting of public officials, civilian contractors, religious scholars and aid workers, and particularly attacks against United Nations personnel, remain key sources of concern. We recognize the commitment to reducing civilian casualties, but regret the 24 per cent increase in civilian casualties as compared with the same period in 2008, and look forward to early concrete measures to concretely and sharply bring down this figure.

With less than two months left before the elections are scheduled to be held, we believe in the critical importance of international assistance in maintaining the positive momentum. We therefore welcome the renewed commitment to Afghanistan's peacebuilding process expressed by international donors at The Hague Conference in March this year, as well as the consensus on a more focused strategy to meet the challenges in Afghanistan, which include adequately funded and effective civilian capacity- and institution-building programmes. More efficient mechanisms should be developed to enhance donor coordination, aid effectiveness and coherence in the allocation and use of available resources. In this connection, we look forward to the Secretary-General's presentation of the benchmarks at the September meeting of the Council.

At the same time, we share the Secretary-General's emphasis on Afghan ownership, for no one but the Afghan people could do better the work of rebuilding and sustaining peace and ensuring the stability, growth and development of their own country. To this end, international assistance should fit into Afghan structures and priorities and the process of Afghanization should gradually be the ultimate answer to all the challenges facing the country.

With that in mind, we call upon all Afghan stakeholders to put the political stability of their country above their partisan or group interests,

renounce violence, overcome divisions and advance dialogue and cooperation in order to succeed in the major political events ahead, and most immediately to make sure that the upcoming elections are fair, free and non-violent, with the broad voluntary participation of the Afghan people.

To conclude, given the many similarities between Viet Nam and Afghanistan in both conditions and levels of development, and given Viet Nam's comparative advantages in areas that agro-based countries like Afghanistan may often need for development, allow me to reiterate Viet Nam's commitment at the Paris Conference last year to staying prepared to contribute our experience and expertise in post-war recovery and development to the reconstruction process in the brother country of Afghanistan.

Mr. Kafando (Burkina Faso) (*spoke in French*): As you conclude your duties as Permanent Representative of your country to the United Nations, on behalf of my delegation I, too, should like to pay tribute to you, Sir, above all for the excellence with which you presided over the Security Council for the month of June, as well as for the quality of the human relationships you have been able to form with each and every one of us. I wish you every success for the future.

Having said that, I would also like to thank Mr. Kai Eide, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), for his briefing. I also wish to thank our friend and colleague, Ambassador Zahir Tanin, Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, for his statement.

The sharp increase in incidents in Afghanistan remains a source of major concern, in particular in the light of the upcoming presidential and provincial elections scheduled for 20 August 2009. However, we are somewhat reassured to see a net improvement in the coordination of activities between the Afghan National Security Forces and UNAMA, on the one hand, and the Independent Directorate of Local Governance and the International Security Assistance Force on the other. They must take the necessary measures to spare the civilian population from the collateral effects of military operations.

The success of the mission in Afghanistan will largely depend on the support of the civilian population for the objectives sought by the international community. In that context, we believe it appropriate to establish a communication strategy to make Afghans aware of the benefits of international assistance.

We also urge the international community to step up its efforts towards Afghanistan, namely in the priority fields, and we urge UNAMA to further strengthen its presence in the country, as resolution 1868 (2009) requires.

In that regard, it is very reassuring to note the strong currents of support shown by the international community for Afghanistan through the organization of recent meetings in Moscow, The Hague, Islamabad and Tehran. We hope that that commitment and that solidarity will greatly benefit the Afghan people.

Clearly, Afghanistan is at a crossroads, and we must together act quickly and with resolve to address the challenges on the horizon. We are pleased that there are no longer controversies surrounding the elections, namely concerning the date and the powers of the President. UNAMA played a big part in reaching that consensus, and we are grateful to it.

We urge the Afghan political class to renounce violence, to accept the rules of democracy and to favour political dialogue, which are indispensable conditions for the success of the elections. In that regard, we welcome the efforts of the Independent Election Commission, which has respected the timeline by launching the election campaign on 16 June.

We welcome the implementation of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy in other sectors deemed priority, where, moreover, progress has been made, in particular the decisions concerning the new national agriculture strategy, police reform and private-sector development.

However, donor coordination and aid effectiveness remain crucial to tangible and lasting improvements in the living conditions of the Afghan population. That is why we welcome the mechanisms set up to strengthen coordination, in particular the peer review mechanism, which will help ensure a coherent allocation of resources and oblige the donors to fulfil their actions.

Similarly, the signing of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework by the Minister of Economy and the United Nations Resident Coordinator

on 28 May constitutes a good policy framework for the activities of the United Nations bodies in Afghanistan.

We also welcome the detailed plan produced by the Afghan Government for the rapid and effective deployment of civilian experts, the effective implementation of which should expand the capacities of the Government in the long term.

Furthermore, encouraging measures in the fight against corruption bodes well for the true resolve of the Government to tackle the threat to extinguish the development efforts. In fact, UNAMA's cooperation remains essential at all levels to fill the gaps.

During the period under consideration, the humanitarian situation still suffers from the effects of natural disasters, which could, if we are not careful, cause public health problems or exacerbate the food crisis. Even if those disasters are managed swiftly thanks to good coordination among the different partners, support measures are needed to reduce the suffering of the people.

Lastly, the indispensable asset of regional cooperation in Afghanistan in both the political and economic spheres must also be underscored. From that point of view, several conferences have reaffirmed the commitment of the countries of the region to support economic projects and to combat terrorism, drug-trafficking and organized crime.

Finally, we hope that all actions undertaken by the United Nations and the international community will receive the consent and support of the Afghans so as to foster their ownership for a better future in Afghanistan.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my national capacity.

I wish to thank the Special Representative, Mr. Kai Eide, for his insightful briefing. I also thank the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, Mr. Zahir Tanin, for his statement.

In view of the upcoming elections, which we hope will constitute a milestone in the transformation of Afghanistan into a stable and democratic State, our meeting today takes on additional significance. Indeed, the holding of those elections in a free and fair manner represents a high priority not only for Afghanistan, but also for the entire international community.

Council members have already emphasized the importance of the election process and expressed their determination to help make it a success. Turkey joins that commitment and reiterates its full support for UNAMA's activities in that regard. In fact, UNAMA is playing an essential role in almost all walks of social, political and economic life in Afghanistan, and we want that to continue unabated in the critical period ahead.

In the light of the Secretary-General's comprehensive report (S/2009/323), I will not go into details of what further could and should be done. Let me just underline that we fully agree with the Secretary-General's observations and recommendations.

In that context, we particularly look forward to agreed benchmarks being formulated and reflected in the next report of the Secretary-General. We believe that that exercise will result in further improving the United Nations work in Afghanistan and will also guide the Member States in their contributions.

As an active contributor to peace and stability efforts in Afghanistan, Turkey pledges its full support to the Secretariat in formulating those benchmarks. We believe that the benchmarks should be concise and achievable, reflecting the challenges and opportunities on the ground. But, even more importantly, given the need for a comprehensive strategy, including security, governance, the rule of law, human rights and social and economic development, the benchmarks must address all those dimensions in a holistic, balanced and realistic manner. Only through such a broad-based and forward-looking strategy can we achieve our common objectives.

Likewise, continued and enhanced regional cooperation is another requirement to accomplish our goals in Afghanistan. Recently, there ~~are~~ have been a number of promising developments in that context, particularly with respect to Afghanistan-Pakistan relations. The international community should continue to encourage and help those efforts to further advance regional cooperation.

For its part, Turkey leads a trilateral cooperation process that includes Pakistan, Afghanistan and Turkey. Building upon our excellent relations with both countries and our deep-rooted engagement in the peace, prosperity and stability of the region, we hope that that initiative will constitute another contribution to the international community's joint endeavours. In

that context, I am pleased to report that the third trilateral summit within that framework was recently held in April in Ankara.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate once again what we have been saying from the first day — that failure is not an option in Afghanistan. Indeed, given the stakes involved, we must succeed, and we are confident that we will.

We have every reason to believe that the proud people of Afghanistan, with the help of the international community, will turn the challenges into opportunities and will pave the way for a bright and prosperous future. Our Afghan brothers and sisters, who have suffered immensely from decades of war and destruction, deserve no less.

Turkey will continue to contribute to the collective efforts in that direction, and we will do everything possible to make sure that we achieve our common goals sooner rather than later.

Now, on a personal note, I extend my warmest thanks and gratitude for all the comments of my colleagues, who have bid me farewell. I must say that they have all been extremely kind and generous in their remarks about me.

On the last day of the Presidency of Turkey, I wish to place on record my deep appreciation, and that of my delegation to our colleagues on the Council, for their cooperation and support. It was a great experience for me and my Mission, and I must add that I and my colleagues in our Mission enjoyed every moment of our Presidency, since there was never a dull moment.

I also wish to thank our Secretariat colleagues for their invaluable support. Their professionalism and dedication are most commendable.

Indeed, this is my last appearance before the Council in my capacity as the Permanent Representative of Turkey, since I will be retiring as of tomorrow. Therefore, taking this opportunity, I would like to say that my four and a half years at the United Nations, and especially the last six months in the Security Council, have been the most interesting and rewarding experiences of my 44 year-long diplomatic career.

I thank all my colleagues at the United Nations and in the Secretariat for their kindness and support. Without their cooperation and understanding, I would certainly have not enjoyed it as much as I did.

Last but not least, I want to thank our interpreters for their tireless efforts. They are the invisible enablers of our work at the United Nations. Without them, we could not function.

I resume my function as the President of the Council.

I now give the floor to the Honourable Lawrence Cannon, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Canada.

Mr. Cannon (Canada) (*spoke in French*): Canada, like a number of other members of the international community, is making considerable sacrifices and mobilizing significant resources in the pursuit of a more stable and secure Afghanistan. The ongoing attention of the Security Council is critical to achieving this objective.

Canada welcomes the most recent report of the Secretary General on the situation in Afghanistan (S/2009/323). It is a thoughtful report that reflects the complex realities we — the Afghans and the international community — confront in promoting security, good governance and development for all Afghans. As the report makes clear, the Afghan Government, the United Nations and the international community are investing considerable energy and resources in assist in the holding of truly democratic elections.

Elections in Afghanistan represent an important milestone in the country's ongoing democratic transition. Across the country, the Afghan people are mobilizing in the millions to organize these elections, to secure these elections, to campaign in these elections, and to vote in these elections. These elections help to meet the aspirations of the Afghan people to exercise increasing influence over the decisions that affect their lives.

Canada is proud to be playing a supporting role, alongside our international partners, in this historic process. We have committed $35 million over three years to support Afghanistan's 2009-2010 elections, including a $25 million contribution to the multidonor programme on enhancing legal and electoral capacity for tomorrow (UNDP/ELECT). We are also paying particular attention to maximizing the participation of women in the electoral process as voters, candidates and observers.

Canadian officials in Kabul and Kandahar are working around the clock to support these efforts. We have also deployed a technical expert to support the work of the Independent Election Commission. Moreover, we hope to deploy election observers as part of multilateral election observation efforts.

We continue to call on the Afghan Government to take all necessary measures to ensure the credibility of the electoral process. In this regard, we welcome efforts to ensure a level playing field for all candidates.

Canada is also working with the Government of Afghanistan and the international community to ensure that these elections take place in the safest environment possible. In Kandahar, for example, Canadian armed forces personnel and civilian police are mentoring the Afghan National Security Forces to provide security throughout the elections process, and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) has also indicated that it stands ready to provide third-line security.

Canada is committed to strengthening the capacity of the Afghan National Security Forces to ensure security throughout the elections process and to promote the rule of law in the future. As the last report of the Secretary General notes, the security situation remains extremely challenging, especially in the south and in Kandahar, which is why one of Canada's key priorities in Afghanistan is to train, develop and mentor Afghan security forces. And we are making progress, as our latest quarterly report to the Canadian Parliament shows. More and more police officers and soldiers are being trained, and some units are now capable of planning, executing and sustaining operations in Kandahar.

All of us agree that the Afghan National Police constitutes the first line of defence in protecting Afghan voters and safeguarding the Afghan electoral process. It constitutes the most visible face of the Afghan Government in the country's districts.

In this context, Canada welcomes the Afghan Government's recent decision to increase the capacity of Afghan National Police by recruiting up to 15,000 new officers in the most insecure areas of the country.

(*spoke in English*)

During my last visit to Afghanistan, I had the privilege of announcing a new Canadian contribution of $21 million to support the rule of law in Afghanistan. Of this contribution $20 million supports the Law and Order Trust Fund to help pay the salaries of police and correctional officers.

Moreover, Canada has recently announced an additional contribution of $12 million to the Law and Order Trust Fund to help pay the salaries of new police recruits. Canadian civilian and military police officers will continue to assist in training and mentoring the Afghan National Police in Kandahar.

Strengthening the rule of law in Afghanistan will be a long and hard road, and the choices and decisions that have been made this year are important steps in this journey. Canada continues to work closely with our Afghan and international partners to coordinate our efforts and build the capacity of the Afghan National Police to provide security to the Afghan population.

The security Afghans seek is akin to the safety we all have come to expect — the simple ability to move freely, for children, including girls, to go to school, for farmers to take their products to market, for families to visit their relatives in neighbouring villages. This security also includes being able to campaign in support of a candidate's platform or to cast a ballot in a remote district. Canada will continue to support legitimate Afghan aspirations in this regard.

The Afghan elections are an Afghan undertaking — elections by the Afghan people for the Afghan people. We encourage our Afghan friends to elect the leaders who best represent their values and their vision. And we encourage Afghanistan's leaders to engage in a fair and transparent debate. In return, we, Canada, pledge our continued support and our neutrality.

We continue to look to the United Nations to reinforce the international community's impartiality in these elections. I would like to salute the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Kai Eide, tireless worker in this regard. Under his leadership, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) has begun to address critical human resource, budgetary and other challenges. UNAMA is clearly stronger this year than last. We commend those efforts. However, there is more we all can do.

Like Kai Eide, I recently returned from very constructive meetings in Trieste, which were organized by Italy under the auspices of the G-8. Nearly 50 States and international organizations actively participated, including Afghanistan's neighbours and the United Nations, again demonstrating the depth of international

resolve on this issue. We spoke specifically in Trieste on how to support efforts towards better border management.

Canada has considerable experience on that issue. We share one of the longest borders in the world with the United States, nearly 9,000 kilometres long. While border management will always depend on the regional context, similar interests of security and prosperity for Afghanistan, Pakistan and the broader region underpin our collective interests. We need to continue to be responsive to Afghan and Pakistani needs. Moreover, we need to prepare to deliver meaningfully, in a way that resonates locally. Indeed, Canada's engagement seeks to do just that.

We continue to learn, adjust and improve the delivery of our assistance to Afghanistan. That includes the elaboration of clear time-bound priorities, benchmarks, targets and indicators to guide our work nationally and in Kandahar. It also includes a strengthened civilian presence in Kandahar and a focus on the humanitarian situation confronting the Afghan people.

As we deploy those new resources, we view the role of the United Nations in Kandahar and throughout the country as fundamental. The United Nations needs to play the same coordinating and leadership role in the provinces as it plays in Kabul. Moreover, its regional presence, which extends our reach and attracts growing numbers of partners, is critical to our shared success.

We similarly look forward to the results of UNAMA's efforts to articulate benchmarks. We encourage ongoing efforts to continue to reduce UNAMA's vacancy rate, and we warmly welcome plans to establish a presence for the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in southern Afghanistan. Taken together, those steps will no doubt strengthen the United Nations ability to help Afghans meet their own aspirations for their country.

As I stated earlier, Afghanistan's future is ultimately in the hands of Afghans, where it should be. Canada remains committed to supporting the Afghan people as they continue to move forward.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Czech Republic, who will be the last speaker for this morning's session of our meeting.

Mr. Kaiser (Czech Republic): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). The candidate countries of Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

Let me begin by expressing our appreciation for the opportunity to participate in today's debate on behalf of the European Union. I would also like to thank Mr. Kai Eide, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his comprehensive briefing and for his excellent ongoing work in leading the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).

As highlighted in the Secretary-General's report (S/2009/323), there have recently been positive developments of great significance in Afghanistan. The work of UNAMA has contributed to that progress. At the same time, daunting challenges remain. The EU strongly encourages the Afghan Government to sustain the positive efforts, so as to ensure a major improvement of the situation, with assistance provided by the multinational presence on the ground. In that respect, the European Union would like to reiterate its unwavering dedication to assisting Afghan authorities in maintaining the current positive momentum during the complex period ahead. That is of crucial importance with regard to the upcoming presidential and provincial elections, which will have significant effects on the development of the situation in Afghanistan.

The upcoming elections, to be held on 20 August, will be a major stepping stone for the further political development of Afghanistan. It is important that the elections serve to ensure the political legitimacy of the next Government and provide it with a strong mandate. The European Union attaches the greatest importance to the holding of legitimate, inclusive and secure presidential elections, in line with international standards, which would strengthen the support of the Afghan people for their institutions. To that end, it is particularly important that the Afghan Government exercises its authority with impartiality and integrity, ensuring a level playing field for all candidates.

The election process should be managed in close cooperation with the Afghanistan Independent Election Commission. The updating of the voter registration list, the completion of the candidate nomination process

and the publication of the final list of candidates, while not without their problems, represent important preliminary developments in relation to the upcoming elections. However, it is vital that sound mechanisms be in place to avoid large-scale irregularities occurring at the time of the vote. The European Union has decided to deploy an electoral observation mission to observe the elections. Clearly, UNAMA will also have a crucial role to play in that regard.

The enhanced international presence in Afghanistan in connection with the elections should focus on safeguarding a stable security situation, and thereby make development possible. Maintaining security during the election period is a shared responsibility between the Afghan national security forces and the international community. The European Union concurs with the Secretary-General's report that increased levels of security-related operations should, however, do everything possible to avoid the risk of more civilian casualties, and that we should continue looking at ways of promoting wider "Afghanization" of relevant operations.

The European Union actively supports the improvement of good governance and the rule of law in Afghanistan, as well as the fight against corruption and promoting respect for human rights. Building Afghan capacity and ownership in the police and civil sectors remains at the core of the EU's engagement in Afghanistan. In that regard, the EU urges the Government of Afghanistan to give the utmost priority to the achievement of significant progress in those areas, especially at the subnational level.

The European Union Police Mission in Afghanistan is clear proof of such an active and continued engagement. The EU Mission aims at contributing to the establishment of sustainable and effective civilian policing arrangements under Afghan ownership. Its mandate encompasses the monitoring, mentoring, advising and training of national police forces.

As a complementary initiative to building up police capacity, the EU underlines the importance of the prospect of a deployment of the European Gendarmerie Force to Afghanistan. Recognizing the Afghan Compact and the Afghan National Development Strategy and the principles agreed to in The Hague at the conference on Afghanistan as the framework for the country's political, social and economic development, the EU intends to further enhance and consolidate its commitment to Afghanistan's reconstruction and development through a common approach and bilaterally by individual member States.

Without a doubt, stability, security and development in Afghanistan are closely linked to the overall situation in the region. The European Union strongly supports the development of a coordinated approach at the regional level and an enhanced cooperation between Afghanistan and its neighbours, especially Pakistan. The EU particularly acknowledges the key role of Pakistan for stability in the region and therefore welcomes the fact that further progress that has been achieved in the bilateral dialogue between Afghanistan and Pakistan, as indicated in the Secretary-General's report. As highlighted in the joint statement of the first EU-Pakistan summit held in Brussels on 17 June 2009, where Pakistan was represented by President Asif Ali Zardari, the EU, in close cooperation with Pakistan, is committed to strengthening security and stability in Afghanistan and the wider region, including through enhanced cooperation on combating terrorism.

The EU appreciates the increased attention of the Group of Eight (G8) countries to Afghanistan and regional cooperation, as also demonstrated by the meeting of the G8 Foreign Ministers on Afghanistan and the region, which took place in Trieste, Italy, on 26 and 27 June 2009.

The EU strongly supports the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan in its important role as the coordinator of international efforts, while recognizing Member States' responsibility to assist UNAMA in performing this task. The new provincial offices are a welcome contribution, and the EU hopes that this expansion can continue. The EU welcomes the intention of the Secretary-General to propose in his report due in September 2009 a finalized set of benchmarks designed to contribute to measuring progress in the implementation of the mandates and priorities of UNAMA.

In conclusion, allow me to recall that the European Union reiterates its full recognition that the primary responsibility for the development of the country lies with the Afghan Government and people themselves. I would like to assure you that the European Union will continue to play an active role in

assisting Afghanistan on its road to security, stability and prosperity, in close cooperation and coordination with UNAMA and other international actors.

The President: There are still a number of speakers remaining on my list for this meeting. I intend, with the concurrence of the members of the Council, to suspend the meeting until 3 p.m. The first statement will then be by the Permanent Representative of the Netherlands.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.